



Fort Eustis

Civilian Personnel Advisory Center Bulletin

www.eustis.army.mil/cpac

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670 Lee Blvd, Fort Eustis, VA 23604-5096



Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Open Season

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has announced the Federal Benefits Open Season enrollment period for health insurance, dental and vision and flexible spending account will continue through January 31, 2009. OPM indicates that this action is necessary in response to concerns over a change in coverage in the Blue Cross Blue Shield out-of-network reimbursement that would have established a \$7,500 co-pay for out-of-network surgeries.

What This Means To You

If you are satisfied with your current open season election, no action is required!

If you want to make a belated Open Season enrollment change to your Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program, Federal Employees Dental or Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) or the Federal Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFEDS), this means you will have an extended enrollment opportunity through January 31, 2009 to make any enrollment change. The following applications shall be used to make changes:

Health Insurance: Go to EBIS at <https://www.civilianbenefits.hroc.navy.mil/>, click on "Access EBIS".

Dental and Vision Insurance Program: Go to BENEFEDS website at <https://www.benefeds.com> <<https://www.benefeds.com>> or call 1-877-888-3337.

Flexible Spending Account: Go to <https://www.fsafeds.com/> or call SHPS at 1-877-372-3337.

Impact of Belated Change

If you make a belated Open Season change to your enrollment in these programs, the effective dates of the belated change will vary among the programs. Depending on the timing of your change and your pay periods, it may take one or more pay periods for your Federal Benefits deductions/allotments to be adjusted to match your new election. You need to know if you make a belated Open Season change and you have claims for services incurred in 2009 under your former plan, you and/or your provider may be responsible for reimbursing the former plan for any benefits paid.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Open Season
- 2 Planning to Retire Soon?
- 2 Adverse/Severe Weather
- 3 Annual Leave – Use It – Don't Lose It
- 4 Annual Leave – Use It – Don't Lose It (Cont.)
- 5 Political Activity In the Workplace
- 6 The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)
- 6 Leaving Army Civilian Service
- 7 CPAC Hails!
- 7 Feedback

Planning To Retire Soon?

If you are preparing to retire, please note that the Army Benefits Center-Civilian (ABC-C) strongly recommends that you submit your retirement application package to them within **90-120 days** of your intended retirement date.

Your early submission will help to ensure a timely receipt of your first annuity payment from the Office of Personnel Management. *If you submit your retirement package to the ABC-C with less than 60 days notice, you should be financially prepared for a delay in the receipt of your first annuity payment.*



Although there are circumstances that may cause a delay in an employee's application submission, the ABC-C strives to complete all packages expeditiously. However, employees are encouraged to follow the ABC-C's 90-120 day recommendation whenever possible to help achieve a smooth financial transition into retirement.

For more information on retirement, visit the ABC-C web site at <https://www.abc.army.mil> and check out the Guide to Retirement at <https://www.abc.army.mil/Information/ABCRetirement/Information/RetirementGuide.doc>.

Adverse/Severe Weather



When adverse weather threatens the area, employees should check several TV/Radio stations to confirm the status of the installation. Sometimes the information relayed by the station may be confusing or incorrect. The installation status is also posted on the installation web page <http://www.eustis.army.mil>. If in doubt contact your chain of command, beginning with your supervisor.

Annual Leave - Use It – Don't Lose It

Civilian employees normally forfeit unused annual leave in excess of 240 hours at the end of the leave year.

Leave Year Beginning and Ending Dates

A leave year begins on the first day of the first full biweekly pay period in a calendar year. A leave year ends on the day immediately before the first day of the first full biweekly pay period in the following calendar year.

The beginning and ending dates of leave years 2008 through 2010 shown below apply to **most employees**. However, some agency payroll systems use a different pay period schedule. Employees should contact their agencies to verify the beginning and ending dates of a particular leave year.



Leave Year	Leave Year Beginning Date	Leave Year Ending Date	Date for Scheduling "Use or Lose" Annual Leave
2008	January 06, 2008	January 03, 2009	November 22, 2008
2009	January 04, 2009	January 02, 2010	November 21, 2009
2010	January 03, 2010	January 01, 2011	November 20, 2010

Employees may have forfeited leave restored to them if the leave was scheduled in advance with the employee subsequently being denied the opportunity to take that scheduled leave due to the exigencies of public business, a lengthy period of illness, or an administrative error. In cases of the leave being denied due to an exigency of public business, the leave must have been **scheduled/rescheduled in writing, prior to the beginning of the 3rd bi-weekly pay period before the end of the leave year, i.e., 22 November 2008**. A Standard Form 71, Application for Leave, may be used for this purpose.

Annual Leave - Use It – Don't Lose It (Cont.)

To request restoration of annual leave forfeited (should be requested after forfeited, not before) as a result of an exigency of public business or illness, employees must submit a written request, through their supervisory chain, to the management official delegated authority to approve the restoration. A list of organizations and who approves the exigency is located at the following website: [Exigency Approval](#). The written request must include the following information (Standard Form 71, Application for Leave, may be used for this purpose):



- The calendar date the leave was scheduled, i.e., approved by the leave approving supervisor/official,
- The actual date(s) the leave was scheduled for use and the amount of leave (days/hours) that was scheduled for use,
- Reasons for the subsequent canceling of approved leave. If leave was denied because of an exigency of the public business, documentation (e.g. a memorandum signed by the designated approving official, stating the specific exigency of public business and the beginning and ending dates of the exigency) supporting the exigency decision must be attached to the employee's request,
- The calendar date the canceled leave was rescheduled for use, or the reason why leave was not rescheduled and,
- The date(s) during which the leave was rescheduled for use and the amount of leave that was rescheduled for use.

Approved request for restoration of forfeited leave should be forwarded to the CPAC, ATTN: DFAS Customer Service Representative.

As an alternative to having your “use or lose” annual leave restored, please consider donating the excess to the employees enrolled in the Voluntary Transfer of Annual Leave Program. A list of all employees enrolled in the program is sent to your admin POC/ HR liaison within your organization. Someone will appreciate the gesture and the leave will not be wasted. Donation of use or lose leave is limited to the lesser of the following:

- One-half of the annual leave to be accrued during the leave year in which it is donated OR,
- Hours donating employee is scheduled to **work and receive pay** (not on leave) in the remainder of the leave year.
- One-half of the annual leave to be accrued during the leave year in which it is donated OR,
- Hours donating employee is scheduled to **work and receive pay** (not on leave) in the remainder of the leave year.

Questions concerning the restoration of forfeited leave should be addressed to the CPAC Human Resources Specialist assigned to your organization.

Political Activity in the Federal Workplace

Under the 1939 Hatch Act, federal employees faced significant restrictions on their ability to participate in political activities. In 1993, Congress amended the Hatch act to permit more political activity by federal employees. The penalties for violating the Hatch Act are very severe, up to and including removal from government service. Therefore, it is very important that employees understand these restrictions.

Below is a list of permitted/prohibited activities:

Federal Employees May:

- Be candidates for public offices in nonpartisan elections
- Register and vote as they choose
- Assist in voter registration drives
- Express opinions about candidates and issues
- Contribute money to political organizations
- Attend political fundraising functions
- Attend and be active at political rallies and meetings
- Join and be an active member of a political party or club
- Sign nominating petitions
- Campaign for or against referendum questions, constitutional amendments and municipal ordinances
- Campaign for or against candidates in partisan elections
- Make campaign speeches for candidates in partisan elections
- Distribute campaign literature in partisan elections
- Hold office in political clubs or parties

Federal Employees May Not:

- Use official authority or influence to interfere with an election
- Solicit or discourage political activity of anyone with business before their agency
- Solicit or receive political contributions (may be done in certain limited situations by Federal or other employee organizations)
- Be candidates for public office in partisan elections
- Engage in political activity while on duty, in a government office, wearing an official uniform, or using a government vehicle

Wear partisan political buttons on duty



The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)

Many employees try to keep up with the IRS maximums for TSP contributions (regular and catch-up). TSP contributions are based on pay dates in 2009 (not pay periods) and making your election/change to coincide with the first pay date in 2009 will allow you to evenly span your contributions over the full 26 pay periods. To do so, you will need to make your TSP election/change (and catch-up election) via the ABC-C system between December 7-20, 2008.

If your goal is to make the maximum regular contribution, it is easier to contribute a dollar amount rather than a percentage. The ABC-C has prepared its annual charts which reflect the exact dollar amount contributions required to reach the maximum, depending on when you start.

If you are interested in making the maximum contributions and make your election/change between 7-20 Dec, see below:

- For 2009, the maximum regular TSP contribution is \$16,500 - \$635 over 26 pay periods.
- The catch-ups, the limit is \$5,500 - \$212 per pay over 26 pay periods.

If you will turn age 50 in 2009, regardless of when, you are eligible to make catch-up contributions for 2009. Although some strive for the limit, you can contribute any amount you choose and you may change or stop your contribution at any time. You will need contribute the maximum regular contributions (\$16,500) to be eligible for catch-up contributions. For more information, check out <http://www.tsp.gov/forms/oc03-03.pdf>

To make a TSP election/change, or to view the ABC-C charts, visit <https://www.abc.army.mil/>. You can make a TSP change at any time; however, any changes made before 7 December will be part of the 2008 pay year, causing some employees to reach this year's limit too soon. This results in paying more in taxes, and for FERS, possible missed agency matching contributions. Catch-up contributions must be elected each year. For 2009 catch-ups, you need to make a new election on or after 7 December 2008.

Leaving Army Civilian Service?

If So, Have You Completed The Army Exit Survey?



This exit survey is designed to study the reasons why people leave Army service voluntarily. Army uses the collective responses of departing employees to identify ways to become a more desirable employer; therefore, your reasons for leaving Army are very important to the study. If you are leaving your employment with the

Army, we ask you to take the time to complete the questionnaire at <http://cpol.army.mil/library/survey/exitsurvey/> before you actually leave. It only takes a few minutes to complete the survey and all responses are confidential.

You are not required to put your name on any part of the survey.

CPAC Hails!

Ms. Georjeana Halstead, HR Specialist returned to Federal service in October 2008, as a reinstatement eligible.

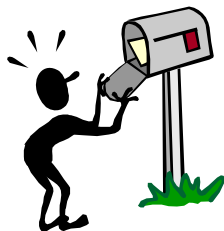
Ms. Michelle Powell, HR Technician joined us from Defense Contract Audit Agency, Newport News, Va.

Ms. Mary Yancey, HR Technician joined us from Civilian Human Resources Agency (CHRA), HQ DA Civilian Personnel Advisory Center, Washington, D.C.

Ms. Francine Taliaferro, Employee and Labor Relations Specialist will be joining us effective November 23, 2008 from Navy Human Resources Office, Norfolk, VA.

Ms. Lorraine White, HR Specialist at Scott AFB, Illinois, joined us from National Park Service, St. Louis, Missouri.

WELCOME



Feedback

This bulletin is designed to inform employees and supervisors of new civilian human resources issues and refresh their knowledge of existing policies and procedures.

We welcome your [feedback](#); contact your servicing Human Resources Specialist. The bulletin is available on our web page, <http://www.eustis.army.mil/cpac>. Request you print and post on Bulletin Boards throughout your organization for those employees who do not have access to our web page.